

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b

Statement of: TOPPIN, ADRIAN

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 6 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: ADRIAN TOPPIN

Date: 13/03/2018

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on rear)

This statement is in relation to the Grenfell Tower incident that occurred. Prior to this incident, I have never been to the Grenfell Tower before.

I am a Fire Fighter and have been for fifteen years. I am currently posted to Tooting Fire Station and part of Red watch. When I started as a Fire Fighter it was in 2003 where I started at Acton, it was in 2008 where I moved to Tooting.

I am trained in order to be able to drive the fire appliances; I have HGV Training as well as previous MASSDCON trained. This is where I am able to respond to chemical incidents.

The night of the fire, I was on a night duty. I started my shift at 2000Hrs. When we start a shift we usually have role call, where we are assigned our roles for the shift. On this shift I was the driver of the pump. At Tooting we have two fire appliances which is a pump and pump ladder.

After role call we go ahead and service our BA sets (Breathing Apparatus). BA sets allows for Fire Fighters to breathe in volatile situations. On average these breathing apparatus will last for around 30mins depending on how hard you work, the level of oxygen in the cylinders will range from 300-280 bars of pressure. We are able to know when we are coming close to running out of oxygen levels as there is a whistle connected to the set that will go off when we are close to running out of oxygen. The BA set

Signature: Adrian TOPPIN
2018

Signature witnessed by:

weighs in at around 10kg. Depending on the job that we may be called to we will have extra equipment and this will be our total weight load up to 15kg.

When we are to attend an incident, before we go into the incident for example a burning building, we will have an entry control officer who is in charge of the entry control board. On this board FF's will hand over their Tally's. A tally is a device which can be removed from our BA sets and will have on it information with regards to the FF. It will state on it how much oxygen we have at the time, that way the entry control officer knows and if they need to call us out they can do.

Once my BA set has been serviced I then make sure the checks on the appliance is done this will include making sure the correct equipment is on the fire appliance and that everything is in good working order. I make sure that this is all noted down in the log book and inventories.

The crew I was with on the particular night shift was:

Crew Manager Dan MORRISON

Fire Fighter Jim HISCOCK

FireFighter Scott ELLIOT

Fire Fighter Oliver HENLEY

I was the driver of the pump and our call sign was H352.

Once all the checks that needed to be done have been completed we will have a lecture. These lectures may be on the subject of policy. If there are no lectures scheduled then we will eat and have some time to ourselves.

I cannot remember exactly when the last time we have had training on a high-rise block of flats but we have had since after the incident of the Tower.

I have had BA set refresher course before the Grenfell Incident cannot be sure of the date that this was on.

Signature: Adrian TOPPIN
2018

Signature witnessed by:

Even though I can't be sure of when I have had training with regards high rise block of flats I have had previous experience of attending an incident of a high rise block on Wandsworth ground. This was nothing to the scale of Grenfell Tower.

I was unaware of any pre prepared firefighting plan for Grenfell. As I am based at Tooting there would be no reason for me to know about this with regards to Grenfell, it is for the fire stations based on each borough to know about these with regards to the high rise block of flats on their grounds.

It was at 0055Hrs that the "bells went down", this is where we are alerted to a call and which appliance is being called to it. I know that our pump ladder had been called prior to this call. They were standing by at Hammersmith. As well as being called over the tannoy system of which appliance is being despatched we also get a print out from the telly printer which is located in the watch room which highlights where we need to go, which appliances has been called and which appliances are now being called. I remember the print out stating that it was a forty pump fire and this was in the Ladbroke Grove area.

I am also a Taxi driver and I grew up in Fulham so I know the area of Ladbroke Grove really well. Due to my knowledge of the area I knew it wasn't an industrial area. At this point in the evening none of us had watched the news so we had no idea of what this was about.

Having been in the job for fifteen years, I have never known for there to be a call of a forty pump fire. In the past there has been calls for twenty pumps but even then you are there on standby and at times not needed.

Having got the information the crew got themselves together and we boarded the appliance and made our way on blue lights. The route I took was: left out of the station on Trinity Road, straight down to York Circus, over Wandsworth Bridge, down Wandsworth Bridge Road, right into New Kings Road, left into Gunter Grove, forward into Finborough Road, forward into Warwick Road, forward into Holland Park Avenue then onto Holland Park Roundabout, forward into Addison Road and we are then by the White City Roundabout. It was there CM MORRISON has got the first pointed out the Tower. At this point I hadn't seen it as I'm concentrating on driving us to the Tower. I was heading to the RVP which was on Bramley Road, on our arrival Bramley Road was closed. At this point I still hadn't personally seen the Tower ablaze. We met up with our pump ladder and we both turned around and accessed Grenfell Tower via Ladbroke Grove. The pump ladder continued straight up Ladbroke Grove where I have turned left into Clarendon Road. I have then parked up by Kensington Leisure Centre.

Signature: Adrian TOPPIN
2018

Signature witnessed by:

Whilst in the appliance the radio channel was busy. CM MORRISON was in charge of the radio. Different sides of the river have different channels and when we crossed over CM MORRISON would have dealt with that.

I was hearing a lot of fire survival calls on the radio, people being trapped on various floors it was pure pandemonium. From hearing this we were able to build a picture of what we were attending.

We also have an MDT Mobile Data Terminal which isn't the greatest piece of equipment but when used we are able to get information about certain jobs, areas and it does have maps on it. I personally wouldn't use it as the maps are not very reliable as a reference.

We have arrived on scene at about 01:20Hrs. There were no other appliances parked in this area. This is the first time the tower became visible to me. It was about 800m away from me. I was in shock at the sight and in sheer disbelief, all I could think about was "how the fuck has this happened". It was like a scene from a movie.

The angle at which I could see the Tower it was 90% alight on two sides and the flames were red raw, there was thick black smoke and it was lit up like a Christmas tree. The flames were literally punching out of windows.

When we walked towards the Tower we had our BA sets with us, as there were only 4 BA sets on the appliance we all had one apart from CM MORRISON. As we are walking through the crowds towards the Tower the general public were pleased to see us. On the way I spoke to my crew and told them that we need to stick together and to think of our families. The mood was very sombre.

CM MORRISON made the decision not to lock our appliance. He stated that this was due to the possibility of other crews that may need to use our equipment.

As we were getting closer to the Tower and walking toward the Kensington Leisure Centre it looked as though the lower floors of the Tower were not on fire. This was looking at the side of the Tower facing the leisure centre as well as the side facing the School. The parts that were on fire, the flames were orange and I could feel the heat of the fire as we got closer to the Tower. I could see people at the windows of their flats.

Signature: Adrian TOPPIN
2018

Signature witnessed by:

OFFICIAL

As we arrived at the Kensington Leisure Centre I came across FF Dave BADILO, from North Kensington Fire Station. He was helping to carry someone on a stretcher. As he passed me he said to me "this is fucking mad, we put the fire out". Shortly afterwards he came back and stated that it was a code 1 job and reiterated that they had put the fire out. This conversation was brief as it was in passing; he has then literally gone again.

At the RVP outside the Leisure centre a crew of three were needed to go to the other side of the Tower, to the playground area. It was then that we were separated from FF ELLIOTT. It was myself, FF HISCOCK and FF HENLEY who were tasked to head to the playground area. CM MORRISON was speaking to a Senior Officer who I don't know.

At this point I was approached by a young lad who was on a live call to his girlfriend who was in a flat on the 15th floor with her dad. This young lad asked me what should he tell his girlfriend to do. As I had only just turned up I told him to "hold on" whilst I go and speak to a senior officer to seek advice. I was able to find a senior officer at the concourse section who instructed me to tell the guy that if they can get out to do so. I relayed this to the individual and stood there listening to him speak to his girlfriend. At no point did I physically take the phone from him or speak directly to his girlfriend.

On my way to the playground holding area I passed a body on the floor which I can only assume had jumped. The body was lying face down on the floor by the main entrance to the tower. I could see head trauma and I believe it was an Asian male. I remember seeing a turntable ladder next to the walk way. Whilst waiting at the holding area I saw a number of casualties being rescued from within the tower. I could see ambulance and police personnel and I can remember it being extremely noisy. I could see people at the windows inside their flats waving for help.

We were then directed to enter the Tower, myself FF HISCOCK and FF HENLEY entered via a very tight gap that had been created when a window had been smashed.

In the lobby area to the right was a wide stairwell going up two floors. This stairwell curved around to the left. There was a lot of water in this area from the hoses as I think the dry riser had failed hence the reason for the hoses on the stairwells. There were a lot of SDBA wearers at one side of the lobby and on the other side were EDBA wearers (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus). FFs that wear EDBA have extra training and their BA sets have two cylinders rather than one.

Signature: Adrian TOPPIN
2018

Signature witnessed by:

The Commanding Officer in the lobby area was Pat GOLDBOURNE, he was committing crews into the building. CM MORRISON was also there and he was the communications officer, alongside him was WM Louisa DESILVA. There was also an entry control officer in the lobby area. I could see that there were currently 2 entry control boards being run at this time. There was a constant stream of casualties being lead out the Tower by FFs. It was at this stage I was told that there was enough SDBA wearers and directed to return to the BA holding area outside by the playground.

FF HISCOCK, FF HENLEY and myself returned to the lobby area and assisted with casualties being brought down the main staircase and helped to escort them outside the building to emergency crews. I had no idea which flat or which floor these casualties came from. I remember seeing a short, slightly overweight Asian female who looked petrified and helped pass her to FF BADILO. Police officers with riot shields were now escorting us to and from the Tower by holding shields above our heads protecting us from the falling debris. I didn't hear any alarms or see any sprinklers whilst in the tower.

I saw a FF come down the stairwell and through the ECP and he was literally on his knees and completely exhausted. I immediately helped him to remove his PPE and gave him oxygen and treated him for heat stress. I was treating him for around 20mins before being relieved by a colleague that knew him.

FF HENLEY and FF HISCOCK were running hoses up the stairs whilst I was dealing with the heat stressed FF. I joined my two colleagues in the main stairwell which was a lot narrower than the one in the lobby area. It was the width of about two people side by side. There was a lot of water running down the stairwell. The lighting was dim but I was still able to see. I didn't have my BA set on and I went up a couple floors to see if I could be of assistance but the smoke was getting thicker so had to retreat. The hoses in the stairwell were making it difficult to go up and down.

The lobby area was now filling up with smoke and making it harder to see and breathe in. The smoke was a white wispy and I was asked by Senior Officer GOLDBOURNE to put the main lobby door in, so I have done this with an axe, which cleared the smoke.

As I looked out of the main lobby door I saw a severed leg on the floor. It had been severed fairly cleanly from the groin to the hip. I did question at first whether or not it was real. I did wonder if it belonged to the deceased person I saw earlier. I left the lobby area as SDBA crews were now only being used and met with FF ELLIOT at the playground holding area.

Signature: Adrian TOPPIN
2018

Signature witnessed by:

At 0600hrs a senior officer tasked myself and FF ELLIOT to go back into the holding area of the tower with our BA sets. The lobby area was now full of water about a foot deep. Myself and FF ELLIOT were sent up the to assist Wimbledon's FRU crew. I believe they were a crew of two or three. We were then tasked to go to the twelfth floor for search and rescue.

We went up the main staircase under air, to the tenth floor where I saw a body of a large person face down in the stairwell. Brixton's crew had attempted to move this person but due to the weight they were unable to do so and told to leave the body in situ. Myself and FF ELLIOT went up to the twelfth floor and stayed in the stairwell. The twelfth floor was dark and we could barely see anything. Our radios were on but it wasn't a great signal. I believe it was from the fourth floor we couldn't hear anything on the radios. I have tried to use the radio on the twelfth floor just to contact control and let them know of the situation but wasn't able to get through.

Our brief was to stay and protect the egress of the Wimbledon crew but unfortunately myself and FF ELLIOT's air was running low, to the point that our whistles had gone off. So we have had to leave. We made our way to the ground floor lobby, through ECP and back to the playground BA holding area. I was then aware that the Wimbledon FRU crew had found a casualty on the 12th floor and had escorted him to safety.

I met a mate who didn't have a BA set so I have handed him mine to use. He performed the fire ground A test and I believe at this point the time was 0800Hrs.

Looking at the Tower from the outside the fire wasn't as intense, and it looked like we had it under control. I did notice at this point that there were no more casualties being bought out of the Tower. We returned to the Leisure Centre awaiting to be released. I met the rest of my crew and were then stood down at about 2:00pm and made our way to Paddington Fire station where we were debriefed and I have been asked to write notes regarding what I did at the incident.

These notes I have been referring to were made on the 14 June 2018 and these are my exhibit ADT/1. They have been given an exhibit seal number of MPSZ13059701 I was fortunate not to suffer any injuries as a result of the fire but I have had some counselling since the incident.

Signature: Adrian TOPPIN
2018

Signature witnessed by:

Statement of: TOPPIN, ADRIAN

OFFICIAL

Form MG11(T)

Page 8 of 8

Signature: Adrian TOPPIN
2018

Signature witnessed by:

OFFICIAL